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Redefining ‘Tradition’ in Political Thought¹

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Abstract

Debates about preserving, modifying and applying *sharia* (Islamic normative guidelines) through principles of *taqlid* (to follow) or *ijtihad* (to carry out independent interpretation) are immensely useful in thinking through a sharper definition of tradition for political theorists and historians of political thought more generally. Political theorists and historians of political thought have tended to use tradition in a range of ways without specifying key elements of the concept. Building on debates in Islamic thought related to *taqlid* and its relationship to *ijtihad*, and through a focus on the ideas of a contemporary thinker, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, this paper proposes that tradition in political thought can be defined as a framework for knowledge production and consumption constituted of two key elements: method and sensibility. Further, the paper suggests that this definition allows us a better understanding of vibrancy in a tradition: vehement debate, contradictions and internal contestation are not signs of decay but of vitality within a tradition. It is the severe delinking of the two elements of a tradition, method and sensibility, which has greater potential to reduce its vibrancy.

Keywords:

Islamic Political Thought, *Taqlid*, Ghamidi, Comparative Political Theory, South Asian Thought

Introduction

While the term tradition is widely used by political theorists and historians of political thought, its key components remain under-conceptualized. From Arendt's (2002) subtle discussion of Marx's place within the tradition of Western political thought, to Pocock's (2003) interest in tracing the influence of Machiavelli's ideas on Anglo-American republicanism, to Runciman's (2001) insightful analysis of the methodological arguments within the field of the history of political thought, few have stopped to define precisely what they mean by tradition, assuming it to be a self-explanatory term. Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, 1990) one of the key figures in Anglo-American philosophy who has taken the idea of tradition seriously, provides us very good reasons for thinking about traditions, about how fragmented lineages may still carry force, and most critically, how critics of a tradition might hope to make their arguments meaningful to its adherents. Yet he too neglects to define tradition concretely. Thus, tradition has been used rather broadly to mean a range of things including the longevity of particular ideas, the lineage of modes of thinking and the provenance of ideas.

Curiously, these notions undergo a transformation when we turn to Euro-American academic study of Islam. Here, the concept of tradition has been used in an entirely different way by placing it in tension with modernity and reform. In this case, it becomes an entirely historical and normative concept. Rather than using a differently inflected meaning of tradition when engaging with Islamic thought, I suggest that debates within Islamic political thought provide important conceptual means for defining tradition more concretely for historians of political thought: tradition may be best defined as a framework of knowledge production *and* consumption comprised of two main elements: method, i.e., a particular way of doing things, making arguments, using resources, organizing thought, interpreting texts, as well as performing rituals or practices; and a sensibility, i.e., a philosophical approach as well

as the particular subjectivities tied to that philosophy. This definition builds on the debates about *taqlid* (to follow) and its relationship to *ijtihad* (to carry out independent interpretation) in Islamic thought that I shall detail in the first section. Many revivalists and orientalists have argued against *taqlid*, viewing it primarily as a set of rituals and practices that Muslims have followed unthinkingly for centuries. They have advocated greater reliance on *ijtihad* to liberate the ‘spirit’ of Islam from the deadweight of out-dated rituals, as well as from methodological norms of working within the defined schools of *sharia*² interpretation for moral guidance that are key to the practice of *taqlid*. I go on to examine the thought of a popular and influential public intellectual, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, and some of the debates generated by his ideas. Unlike a previous generation of Muslim modernists, Ghamidi has privileged a dramatic emphasis on method in his attempt at reinvigorating the Islamic tradition by establishing strict criteria for interpreting *sharia* that include a significant disdain for earlier interpretive works. Through a focus on his thought and building on the discussion on *taqlid*, I argue that vibrancy within a tradition is generated through a constant calibration of method and sensibility. When and if the matter is settled too dramatically in favour of one or the other, or if method is separated markedly from the sensibility, then we can expect a reduction of debate and hence vibrancy within the tradition. Ghamidi’s emphasis on a strict method for interpreting the Quran without recourse to the vast corpus of older interpretive literature and debates, results in a less capacious sensibility, reducing the scope for diversity in thought and practice.

In the last three decades Javed Ahmed Ghamidi has emerged as a prominent thinker and public intellectual, not just within Pakistan, but also at an international level, hailed in an American newspaper as ‘a bit of a rock star -- adored, hated, popular, and notorious all at once’³. As a prominent scholar of the Quran he brings together religious learning with a wide accessibility in his role as a public intellectual. Currently in exile, due ostensibly to his liberal

and tolerant views that have excited extremist responses, Ghamidi continues to play an important role in contemporary Islamic intellectual debates, particularly in urban Pakistan's public sphere through his publishing (including the journals *Ishraq* in Urdu and *Renaissance* in English), TV show, research and teaching institute (*al-Mawrid*) and school system (*Mus'ab* schools).

However, attempts at classifying Ghamidi's thought raises interesting challenges: he has been called a 'critical traditionalist' (Masud, 2007:356) but also a 'liberal reformer' (Yasmin, 2012: 177). This places him in directly oppositional categories within the dominant Western academic framework of classifying Islamic thought, in which tradition and reform continue to frame a binary⁴. These challenges are productive in exploring the changing political valence of the idea of tradition in the contemporary politico-intellectual context of the ongoing war on/of terror, and raise important considerations in tracing the contours of revivalism in contemporary Islamic thought. I suggest that a previous schema of associating reform with Muslim modernists, and stagnation or resistance with traditional or traditionalist thinkers, is particularly redundant in the face of a new generation of scholars who are keen to be defined as traditionalists or at least as being closely bound to the tradition. Revivalism in modern Islamic tradition, I suggest here, has been primarily concerned with calibration of method and sensibility, some revivalists privileging one and some the other of these two key constituents of tradition. More critically then, these debates allow greater depth to our understanding of vibrancy within a tradition.

Taqlid, Ijtihad and Modern Islamic Thought

Scholars of Euro-American political thought speak easily of the Western tradition, or the liberal or Marxist traditions. However, as soon as we turn our focus to Islamic political thought, as well as most other non-Western thought, chameleon-like, the term "tradition"

changes meaning. Tradition takes on stageist connotations, and in the Euro-American academic study of Islamic thought it is defined primarily in relation to the ideas of ‘modernity’ or ‘reform’: on this reading, the Islamic tradition is inevitably too traditional.

In fact, the idea of ‘tradition’ has a complex and important history in Islamic thought, which is useful to consider separately from the Western academic study of Islam. Classical Islamic thought is immensely self-conscious about being a tradition, in terms of knowledge production and consumption, with long running debates on the method and the sensibility that are contained within it. For instance, there is great emphasis on both a method and sensibility for recording and judging the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet) and *sunna* (life of the Prophet and his companions) as they are seen to provide exemplary guidance to the question of the good life. In terms of method, there is an emphasis on establishing how the *sunnan* and *ahadith* (sing. *hadith*) are recorded, which accounts can be deemed reliable, who recounted them and to whom, how precisely might these be interpreted. In terms of sensibility there is an interest in establishing the philosophical basis for using *hadith* or *sunna* and working through their role in producing specific subjectivities and social realities. All of this has received a lot of attention in Islamic philosophical and juridical literature precisely because of the interest in fusing both the method and the sensibility, practice and philosophy. Indeed, in the Islamic context juridical and philosophical literature often overlaps considerably since questions of practice in particular social contexts are linked inextricably to questions of philosophical premises, and recognized explicitly as such.

Two important concepts that bring this aspect of tradition to the fore are *taqlid* and *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is independent interpretation of the Quran, and since the early 20th century has been seen as a panacea to the purported stagnation of Islamic thought. Here, I shall focus more on *taqlid* not just to highlight the ways in which it is misunderstood, but also because it is in the details of its misinterpretation that we find important clues for thinking about the

question of tradition. *Taqlid* is a conscious decision, both by the scholar and the lay person, about which *mujtahid* (innovative or creative interpreter), or *mazhab* (philosophical school)⁵ to follow in defining what makes a good Muslim life. In his pioneering work, Hallaq has argued persuasively that the consolidation of *taqlid* as an important element of Muslim life was meant primarily as a way for the different scholars and jurists to anchor their own reasoning (Hallaq, 2009: 110-113) as well as a way to separate out the *mujtahids*—those who have the intellectual and spiritual ability to innovate—from other scholars (Hallaq, 2009: 75). Different classical scholars supported varying versions of *taqlid*, from ‘following the opinion’ to ‘following the person’. For instance, the 13th century scholar Al-Amidi (d. 631 AH/1233 CE) favoured following the person, i.e. the scholar, because he argued that while thought and reflection are universal to all human beings, the average person may find it hard to assess the weight of evidence behind each opinion, but may still be able to discern more readily between a more learned authority than a less learned scholar (Rahman, 1965:161). Contrary to the claims of orientalist scholars who have seen *taqlid* as a kind of blind following, whether of established schools of jurisprudence or of particular rituals only, it is useful to recognize that for the average believing Muslim, in theory at least, the choice about which scholar to follow to ground one’s ethical behaviour is an open one, but one that carries within it an active recognition of the method (eg. how to use particular resources such as *ahadith*) as well as philosophical sensibility (e.g. what ethical goals are of primary importance) of individual scholars as well as of the different philosophical schools or *mazahib* (sing. *mazhab*). *Taqlid* then is not just about ritual but also about philosophy, not just method but also sensibility. One important advantage of *taqlid* has been that it allowed sometimes opposing, and often very different ways of being Muslim to be equally valid (Rahman 1961: 163; Hallaq, 2013; Jackson, 1996; Rapaport 2003). This capaciousness, as well as a lack of

reliance on state imposition, has allowed *sharia* as Islamic legal and moral guidance immense entrenchment in social life (Hallaq, 2013).

From the Islamic sixth (and Christian twelfth) century *taqlid* has been more prominent in Islamic juridical literature and practice, but *ijtihad* too has been continuously invoked even if it did not dominate. *Taqlid* allowed predictability and flexibility at the same time. Providing predictable responses based on the sensibility and method of each *mazhab* allowed significant social stability. At the same time, given the diversity contained within the different *mazahib* or schools that were recognized as equally valid, ordinary Muslims were afforded significant choice and plasticity within *sharia*. Some schools became associated with particular activities e.g. sales of charitable endowments are often conducted under Hanbali *mazhab* because Hanbali interpretation allow for such sales while others do not support it. At the same time, it was possible for people who would ordinarily follow one school of interpretation to bring specific legal cases to another school's courts. For instance, under Mamluk rule (659-923 AH/1261-1517 CE) the predominantly Hanafi military elite would take endowment sales cases to Hanbali courts (Rapoport, 2003:22). Indeed, even *qadis* or jurists could move from one *mazhab* to another (Rapoport, 2003:227)

Paradoxically given this flexibility and capaciousness, *taqlid* had been translated by influential European scholars in terms of blind adherence to established norms or tradition, as "imitation," (Coulson 1964: 80), "servile imitation," (Makdisi 1981: 199) and "unquestioning acceptance" (Schacht 1964: 71). *Taqlid* became associated with "intellectual timidity, and/or depletion of creative and interpretive energies" (Jackson, 1996: 170). European scholars and administrators built upon early modern, pre-colonial Islamic movements of reform and renewal such as those led by Ibn Wahab in Arabia and Shah Wali Ullah in India, both of whom criticized excessive reliance on *taqlid*. However, these Muslim scholars saw *taqlid* in a complementary relationship with creative interpretation or *ijtihad* (Dallal, 1993). Colonial

administrators incorporated that internal critique into a dramatically more sustained attack on *taqlid* itself. This attack was also inflected with their own conceptions of tradition. From the late 18th century, relying on an Enlightenment conception of tradition as unchanging and regressive, a conflation of tradition as blind adherence and *taqlid* as tradition was operationalized by colonial scholars/administrators in their policy decisions. In South Asia, such assumptions played a role in the homogenization, codification and ultimately stagnation of sharia that the British administrators carried out under the rubric of Anglo-Mohammaden with the aspiration to standardize. This codification led to the loss of precisely that internal diversity, even contradiction, that made *sharia* adaptable and alive, such that by the late 19th century, what was by then called Mohammedan law was seen by many urban Muslims too as stagnant (Kugle, 2001). Urban Muslim modernist reformers such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Amir Ali⁶ appropriated and internalized this framing of *taqlid* and tradition. For instance, Amir Ali singled out *taqlid* for particular attack by arguing that “it is a common belief that since the four Imams no scholar has arisen qualified to interpret the laws of the Prophet. No account is taken of the altered circumstances in which Moslems are placed... They mixed up the temporary with the permanent and the universal with the particular” (cited in Binder 1957: 387). The gulf between urban Muslims who were exposed most dramatically to ‘Mohammedan’ law, and rural Muslims who continued with more localized *sharia* adjudication, was reflected by the early 20th century in calls for a dramatic transformation of *taqlid* amongst segments of urban Muslims. The immense creativity of Islamic thought since the late 19th century (Iqtidar, 2011:38-54) is structured precisely around these questions of *taqlid*, looking to calibrate the relationship between method and sensibility.

Tradition Across Disciplines

The history of political thought has remained somewhat insulated from such debates about tradition in other places and in other disciplines. Even as Islamic thought was being studied through the binary of tradition and reform through the mid 20th century, within the wider discipline of history, historians had started challenging the idea of tradition as unchanging, monolithic and timeless. The much-quoted Hobsbawm and Ranger volume *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) pointed out the recent creation of many traditions. But more significant than this recognition that many ‘traditional’ practices were of recent manufacture, was the realization that modernity could not be defined without creating for it a particular past from which to distinguish it. That is, a tradition of the past had to be invented to act as a foil for all that modernity brought and to clarify what modernity entailed.

In part, this recognition of the role of tradition in enlightenment thought and its definition of European modernity has been the result of postcolonial critiques and their questions regarding the conflation of reform with modernity (Asad 1993, 2003, 2015; Chatterjee, 1994; Chakrabarty, 2000, 2003). Post-colonial critique has made a concentrated push against the definition of modernity as a uniquely European experience that relegated the rest of the world to what Chakrabarty (2000:8) has aptly called ‘the waiting room of history’; of capitalism as the West’s self-generated and self-sustained revolution divorced of its relationship to colonialism (Prakash 1996; Mignolo 1999) and of categories of analysis that have claimed universal application without adequately demonstrating their ability to move beyond a European provenance. All of this has led to the recognition of the multiplicity of ways in which traditions, particularly intellectual traditions, and modernity may be intertwined. What emerges, also, is a clear sense that it is crucial to separate modernity as a period, from modernity as a project for the non-western world to emulate.

Building directly or indirectly on post-colonial theory, a generation of scholars in Anglo-American academia has over the last two decades engaged with Islamic thought and thinkers with greater subtlety (Al-Azmeh 1993; Brown, 1996; Euben, 1999; Zaman, 2002; Browsers, 2006; Devji, 2007). Thinkers who had been labelled resistant to change by orientalist scholars such as Bernard Lewis, as well as by Islamic modernists such as Fazlur Rahman, were reconsidered as creative, if critical, interlocutors with European modernity. Those labelled as fundamentalist have been recognized as pursuing reform but without accepting the conceptual hegemony of Western categories of analysis.⁷ This recent body of scholarship has been concerned primarily with demonstrating that many revivalists and ‘fundamentalists’ are not traditionalists in the sense of resisting change, as had been assumed by a previous generation of scholars. It has also successfully opened up the category of the modern to include a wider range of members. This scholarship has highlighted the long running engagement with new modes of thought, categories of analysis, and political realities that Islamic as well as Islamist political thinking has entailed in the last two centuries⁸. Yet, one lacuna in this scholarship is that tradition remains under-conceptualized.

In the case of Islam there have also been differently inflected debates across different disciplines. When anthropologists came across the diversity of ideas and practices observed under the banner of Islam they either relegated them to “little traditions” (as opposed to “great traditions” of script-based ideas and practices based on the schema proposed by Robert Redfield in 1956), or abandoned this classification altogether, asserting that there is no one Islam to study and observe. This was, as mentioned earlier, in tension with conversations in other disciplines such as history and religious studies, where scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and political ideas attempted to identify the key concepts that held Islam together over the many centuries. The only unifying feature across the different disciplines was the suspicion that Islam remained ‘traditional’ in the modern age.

It is within this context that the cultural anthropologist and post-colonial theorist Talal Asad argued that Islam needs to be viewed as a ‘discursive tradition’ and separated from questions of modernity (Asad, 2009).

“...[O]ne needs to recognize that when one talks about tradition, one should be talking about, in a sense, a dimension of social life and not a stage of social development. In an important sense, tradition and modernity are not really two mutually exclusive states of a culture or society but different aspects of historicity.”⁹

Asad argues that we speak of the liberal tradition, not as a stage of development, but as a body of ideas and practices which has its roots in European history¹⁰. Asad’s argument is not that liberalism is a mix of the traditional and the modern, but that it is a tradition that is central to modernity. Thus, he suggests we may envision a tradition as a broad vocabulary of ideas and practices, which constrain and inspire adherents at any given moment in history without precluding different arrangements in other times and places. In doing so, Asad resolves, or at least moves past, the question of the great and little tradition, and also the idea of many Islams. Islam emerges in Asad’s work (1993, 2003, 2015) as a capacious vocabulary that is as modern as any other, even as it carries within it medieval and pre-modern ideas.

More interestingly for our purposes here, the closer focus on the relationship between thought and practice that Asad insists on, allows more fruitful ways of engaging with histories of political thought beyond the text¹¹. Asad argues, like Alasdair Macintyre¹², whose ideas on tradition were useful for Asad, that the dichotomy between thought and practice is a product of a particular European history but one that is not helpful in understanding either. One reason why Asad disputes the thought/practice dichotomy is because it renders analysis more susceptible to bypassing questions of power¹³. Implicit in this particular criticism is an aspect of his larger critique of liberalism as a tradition unmoored from its religious origins and unable to recognize its contradictions because of that disconnect¹⁴.

Thus, we now have an expanded notion of traditions, and of Islamic tradition in particular, not as the deadweight of the past, but as systems of thought and practice that include both method and sensibility, with a symbiotic relationship between knowledge production and its consumption, and which can sustain debate, difference and questioning without being overcome and transformed completely by them¹⁵. Reform and revision is not the sole preserve of the modern but an integral part of sustaining a tradition. The recent work of scholars like Hallaq (2003; 2009; 2001), Khaduri (1984) and Zaman (2002; 2012) have given us an understanding of debate, discussion, reform and retrenchment that has been a part of both the classical and modern Islamic tradition. Moreover, the assumption that modern Muslim revivalism is inspired only by Wahabism¹⁶ or only as a reaction to colonial imposition flies in the face of the immense diversity of inspirations and ideas with which Muslim revivalists have engaged.

To lend more depth to this claim, we might take another look at South Asian Muslim revivalists. Despite the characterization of this late 19th and early 20th century as a period of intellectual decay and the *ulama* (Islamic scholars and jurists) as a parasitical class who foster this decay by Muslims modernists and orientalist scholars, it was a period of extraordinary creativity and debate among religious scholars who engaged with colonial conditions but also built directly or indirectly upon the pre-colonial reform movement of Shah Waliullah (1703-1762)¹⁷ in Delhi [Lelyvand, 1978; Metcalf (1982), Gilmartin (1988), Sanyal (2005)]. Indeed, South Asia in particular has been home to significant creativity within the Islamic tradition, in terms of schools of thought (Deobandi¹⁸, Bareilwi¹⁹), organizational arrangements (Tablighi Jamaat²⁰) syncretic approaches to Islamic learning across the Shia-Sunni divide (Farangi Mahal²¹) and an engagement with non-Abrahamic faiths such as Hindu and Buddhist traditions (see Gilmartin and Lawrence, 2000). Yet all of these innovations were carried out within the framework of reviving and rejuvenating the tradition. From the Islamist Maududi

to the pietist Mohammed Ilyas, the nationalist *alim* Abul Kalam to the socialist Maulana Bhashani and even the modernist Fazlur Rehman, revivalists have been working through different calibrations of method and sensibility to reinvigorate the tradition. It is particularly useful to recognize that modernists like Fazlur Rehman, Amir Ali and Syed Ahmed Khan were also looking to revive Islam and engaged deeply with it despite their criticism of the ‘traditionalists’²². Their effort was focused primarily on extracting the sensibility or an essence from the tradition, or to expand the repertoire of methods, but it was never a complete rejection of both. Thus, Islamic reform cannot be understood in opposition to tradition. Moreover, it is not just triggered by colonialism or as a reaction to modernity. Instead, Islamic revivalism in the modern period has been a multifaceted, creative, more than two-century-long engagement with the question of the perfect balance between method and sensibility given new modes of governance and social organization.

Javed Ahmed Ghamidi: Tradition and Method

In this section I bring more depth to the discussion above by elaborating the calibration of method and sensibility in Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s thought, and by indicating how a dramatic focus on one aspect (in Ghamidi’s case, on method) has the potential to limit the vibrancy of debate. In English-language media coverage of Ghamidi’s work, he is generally proclaimed as a liberal thinker, a designation Ghamidi has never appropriated for himself²³. It is pertinent to point out at this early stage that Ghamidi’s rise to prominence is tarnished, at least partially, through an association with military dictatorship in Pakistan and America’s war of terror in the region. The wars in Afghanistan, and Iraq, and an associated program of promoting secularism, and somewhat paradoxically, ‘traditionalist’ thought²⁴, in Muslim countries often at the cost of democracy, played out in Pakistan with US support for the military dictatorship of General Musharraf for close to 11 years. One of the key publicly provided reasons for

Western support for Musharaf's regime was its perceived value as a bulwark against religious fundamentalism in the region. Obliging, Musharaf instituted a program of "Enlightened Moderation"²⁵ which entailed, among other primarily discursive overtures against religious fundamentalism, the appointment of Ghamidi as a member of the Council for Islamic Ideology²⁶. Some commentators have implied opportunism²⁷ on Ghamidi's part due to the elision of his ideas against Islamism with the General's regime. Critics have argued that he is not really an *alim* (a religiously trained scholar) or even a believer (Japanwala, 2008:17). Such criticism raised implicit and explicit questions about his appointment to the constitutional body. However, prior to his appointment, Ghamidi had already established a significant public presence for himself through his TV shows, regular writings and the publication exegetical works: *Al-Burhan* (The Proof) and *Al-Mizan* (The Scales). Ghamidi's television program *Deen aur Danish* (Religious Perspective and Reason) was immensely popular among urban, educated and upper class audiences²⁸.

Ghamidi's hesitation in appropriating the mantle of a liberal Islamic reformer indicates his desire to be seen to be transforming the tradition from within. Without implying strategic positioning on Ghamidi's part, it is important to recognize that his intellectual effort coincides with an international interest in what is being called 'traditionalist' Islamic thought, that entails an attempt at outmanoeuvring the Islamists by claiming greater authenticity for ideas opposed to theirs²⁹. Of course, these US led attempts at managing Islamic discourse to produce less political and militant versions of Islam are not seamlessly translated from intention to effect (Aziz, 2011; Mahmood, 2006). It is useful to recognize and appreciate the internal dynamics that couple with such hegemonic attempts to produce new constellations of ideas. Indeed, many of the new traditionalists view themselves as building on epistemological premises more sophisticated than the modernists and are trying to rethink the shift in emphasis towards 'modernizing Islam' brought about by an earlier generation of reformers

(Kersten, 2014). Yet, at the very least, this international political-intellectual context provides salience to their ideas and often an international audience that continues to imagine Islamic reformism as a recent endeavour³⁰.

Within this context Javed Ahmed Ghamidi follows a particular path opened up by his teacher³¹, Maulana Islahi (1904-1997) and Islahi's mentor Maulana Farahi (1863-1930), but brings an intensity to the question of method that is much more dramatic than either of his erstwhile teachers ever imagined. Farahi and Islahi were both brilliant scholars, trained in what has been called the 'traditional' mode of education, which refers primarily to being educated at a madrasah. Islahi was a student of Farahi at the *Madrassa-e-Islah* (hence the name "Islahi," i.e., "of Islah") established by Maulana Farahi. Moving beyond the simplistic, sharp dichotomy between traditional and modern education often associated with *madaris*, it is useful to recognize that Maulana Farahi studied Arabic poetry in Lahore with Maulana Fayz-al-Hassan Saharanpuri (1816-1887) and then moved to Aligarh University, the seat of Muslim modernist thought (Lelyvand, 1978) where he engaged closely with the German orientalist Jozef Horowitz (1874-1931) and somewhat less enthusiastically with the English orientalist Sir Thomas Walker Arnold (1864-1930)³². Farahi also had the experience of traveling in the Persian Gulf with the then British Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, in 1903³³ as a scholar with command over Persian, Arabic and English languages. On setting up madrasa Islah, Maulana Farahi brought these, and a diverse range of other influences to bear on the curriculum as well as the general organization.

That Farahi, like his friend Shibli Nomani, was first a poet and philosopher was reflected in the curriculum of the madrasa that he set up in Siharanpur in North India. There was a strong emphasis on Arabic literature in particular and an exploration of the philosophical principles in Quran. He used pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and literature as a guide to understanding the meanings and implications of words used in the Quran. He read

mythical accounts, historiographical explanations and maps with equal interest to appreciate the references made in the Quran. And finally, he read some contemporary European philosophical literature. One of his key works, a critique of the work of Al-Jurjani, the 11th century Persian scholar of Arabic rhetoric and metaphorical language, is linked to his critique of Greek philosophy in Islam. Writing in Arabic, he wrote for, by his own admission, only an audience of other *ulema*, that is, scholars like him. Farahi's key innovation was to insist upon an organizing principle, an order—a *nazm*—in the breakdown of Quranic verses and chapters.

Amin Ahsan Islahi, one of the many brilliant scholars who flocked to Farahi's madrasa, worked primarily as a journalist³⁴ after completing his studies. In 1922 Islahi returned to the madrasah on Farahi's request and took up an extended study of the Quran with Farahi. Soon after he also started teaching at the madrasa. Building on his teacher's work, Islahi further developed his approach to systematizing the study of Quran. Moreover, building on his training in medieval Arabic poetry that he received from his teacher Farahi (who in turn had been taught by one of the pre-eminent scholars of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry Maulana Fayz-ul-Hassan Saharanpuri at the Anglo-Oriental College in Lahore in the 1830s) Islahi suggested that Quranic verses need to be interpreted in accordance with Arabic poetic norms of Mohammed's period. For instance, if there is confusion about multiple meanings of a word, then the meaning used most commonly in Arabic poetry at the time of the Prophet Mohammed can be assumed to hold.

Interestingly, despite Farahi and his pupil Islahi's insistence on methodological continuity, Islahi was one of the few madrasa-trained ulema who lent support to the Abul Ala Maududi's (1903-1979) Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami at a time when Islamism was seen as a grotesque innovation by the majority of ulema and none were willing to join it (Iqtidar, 2011: 108-112). Islahi's 19 year long association with JI has not received adequate assessment nor indeed is Ghamidi's *al-Mawrid* institute literature quick to point out that

Islahi finally parted with the Jamaat-e-Islami in protest against JI's decision to support a female candidate in Pakistan's presidential elections³⁵. Somewhat paradoxically, during the 1960s, the CIA suspected Islahi of being a communist sympathizer (Nasr, 1996:172).

Ghamidi, a pupil of Islahi, has followed him and has deepened that search for the organizing principles of Quran, and has identified seven distinct groups within which the Quran can be divided (2011:51-53). Moving away from Farahi's insistence on writing in Arabic (Ghamidi writes in Urdu) Ghamidi has built upon Ishahi's creative scheme for interpreting the Quran and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet) but proceeded beyond his teachers' path to alter method dramatically and severely limit reliance on the existing *fiqh* (interpretive) literature³⁶. This vast body of literature includes interpretive and theoretical works on *sharia*, the broad normative guidelines that are meant to underpin an Islamic society. This move is linked to the distinction that he wants to make between Divine guidance and its interpretation (Shahzad, 2001:12). Interpretation remains open to mistakes but Divine guidance is absolute and pure. *Fiqh* literature, by implication, is open to mistakes and confusion and thus not a reliable resource.

Ghamidi establishes further procedures for the use of *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet) to supplement the understanding of Quran. He argues that hadith can only be taken as a supplementary explanation of ideas and injunctions in the Quran (2011: 64-68) and cannot be taken to add anything beyond what is in the Quran. More dramatically, in his bid to contextualize the Quran historically he has argued for an innovative use of *Sunna* by suggesting that *sunna* represent particular practices rather than a philosophy (2011:10, 61-64). Thus, *hadith* and *sunna* can only have a limited role to play in interpreting the Quran. More critically, while some interpretation of Quran were valid for the Prophet and Muslims around him to undertake at the time, they are no longer legitimate for any individual or group of Muslims to operationalize now. This is not because, as many have insisted before him,

modern statecraft and other paraphernalia of modernity did not exist then, but rather because having the Prophet in their midst gave the Muslim community of the time a clear advantage in understanding and interpreting the Quran (2011: 452). Today's Muslims do not have such a clear model in front of them so they cannot be expected to do full justice to some of those duties.

Building on the literary approach of Maulana Farahi, Ghamidi further argues that Quranic interpretation has to proceed through the application of the widely used meanings of Arabic terms of the time of the Quran as they are found in literary material from the period. In fact, he argues, classical exegesis has often misunderstood terms because the exegets have not understood that Quran is not a book of laws and instead is a kind of literary production (2011: 26-27) that needs to be approached as such keeping in mind the intricacies of the predominantly oral culture of the period. Applying this clearly delineated and fairly strict approach, Ghamidi has undertaken to overturn some previously dominant readings of Quran by emphasizing a different connotation or meaning to terms.

Ghamidi methodology implies a highly restricted role for individual interpretation of the Quran. This is in stark contrast with Islamist parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami, which advocated a radical break from mediated religious practices that operated through the charisma and spiritual power of local *ulema*, sufi saints, *pirs* and preachers. The Islamist's break from cultural practices of indirect interpretation and access appealed to a new class of upwardly mobile, previously lower middle class college graduates of early to mid 20th century, who felt that they now had the tools to interpret *sharia* themselves. Ghamidi speaks to a new generation of Muslims who have seen their parents trying to carry the burden of interpreting *sharia* for themselves, and realizing how daunting it is. Ghamidi does not take away the option of individual analysis and interpretation, but lays down strict rules while explicating strongly that those rules can only be followed by those who have immersed

themselves in specialized study of Arabic poetry, Quranic hermeneutics, Muslim history, and related subjects (2011: 19-40). Thus, while the option for lay individuals to interpret *sharia* and *Quran* remains open in principle, for all intents and purposes it is not one just anybody can realistically pursue. This despite the fact that Ghamidi cuts out a major source of Quranic interpretation which is the *fiqh* literature.

One important example of the implications of Ghamidi's insistence on his specific method is his vision of the state. He establishes a strictly minimalist role for the state while at the same time exhorting Muslims to 'fully cling to state authority in all circumstances' (Ghamidi, 2010: 452). The state has not just the right, but the duty to decide when to wage war. However, through this reasoning, the decision is, in Ghamidi's view, taken firmly out of the hands of individuals. Ghamidi's reading of 'political sharia' (2011: -451464) does not allow the state any right to pronounce some groups non-Muslims or to impose metrics of piety such as fasting, praying or covering their heads on its citizens. In a subtle and implicit way, Ghamidi is negating the state-led Islamizing initiative undertaken during the regime of a previous military dictator, General Zia (1977-1988) in Pakistan. Committed to methodological purity, Ghamidi does not question the right of the state to impose laws based on *sharia* but hollows out existing Islamic laws of their moral force. This is not an inadvertent move on his part, but a deeply thoughtful and nuanced one.

His socially restrained and minimalist state is nevertheless very powerful. Ghamidi privileges laws of the state—even if the state is not explicitly Islamic—in a manner that is radical, despite his understated style. He argues that the laws in a Muslim majority state should be decided through achieving a consensus among the majority of the citizens (pp. 452-455). In fact, he argues that *shura* or consultation is an obligation (p.462) and no Muslim collectivity should be organized without this important principle enshrined in the institutions. Individual scholars, as well as citizens might have opposing interpretations of sharia

guidelines and the state cannot impose demands for religious performance on its citizens, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. However, he also argues that beyond matters of religious observance, once established through whatever means, state laws have primacy, because any attempt at transforming them will lead to strife. Laws can only be changed slowly and so until that happens, they should be acknowledged and followed. Ulema, and all citizens, have the right to debate and discuss laws but their discussions, and even protests, should remain within the framework of laws, however tightly drawn that framework might be.

Relationships between Muslims residing in different states cannot be on the basis of nation (*qaum*) but on the basis of brotherhood (*akhuwat*). He argues in his article “*Islam aur Riyasat aik Jawabi nazaria* (Islam and The State: An Alternative Perspective³⁷) that Muslims are not required to give up their national identities to be Muslim but rather to cultivate a feeling of love towards other Muslims. That is, he argues that what the rise of sectarianism in Muslim countries requires is not the imposition of secularism but an Islamic counter-narrative that binds these Muslims together but at the same time, does not undermine their national affiliations. Here, he counters the idea of *ummah* that Islamists have used by arguing that it should not be made to compete directly with national identities and Muslims should engage embrace fully life in whichever state they find themselves in as long as that state does not impose a heavy burden on them.

With these arguments Ghamidi has used a strict hermeneutic methodology to come to conclusions that merge smoothly with the liberal conception of state with its emphasis on legality, evolutionary change and secular nationalism. Similarly, he has articulated a critique of individualized actions as jihad that is particularly pertinent to concerns about radicalisation within the context of the ongoing and continuously intensifying war on terror. In his reading of the rights of religious minorities as well as the rights of women, Ghamidi privileges a human rights conception. Mohammed Khalid Masud, a noted scholar, like Ghamidi a student

of Maulana Islahi, and a one-time chair of the Council of Islamic Ideology, has rightly suggested that Ghamidi's key innovation is to bring a human rights approach into Islamic discourse without referring directly to the concept or terminology of human rights (Masud, 2007). Indeed, as discussed above, Javed Ghamidi makes no direct reference to sources other than *Quran* and *Sunna*, avoiding the more widely used sources of *hadith* and established *fiqh* literature. Moreover, despite his repeated references to Allama Iqbal, the South-Asian poet philosopher as an inspiration for his attempts at the 'reconstruction' of Islamic thought, Ghamidi does not explicitly own cosmopolitan sources in the way that Iqbal did. Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of late colonial India (1877-1938) acknowledged influences as diverse as the South Asian poet Hali, the German philosophers Nietzsche and Hegel, the Irish novelist Joyce, and the Persian poet Hafiz.

It is important to Ghamidi that in his exegetical texts and commentaries he follows the strict methodology he has defined and claims is the true rendition of the Islamic tradition³⁸. Ghamidi's intense focus on method that excludes the use of *fiqh* and maintains a strict focus only on the Quran based on the systematization he has devised, can be seen as a long running conversation with the modernist reformers who showed a disregard for method, such as the modernist Amir Ali who advocated privileging "the spirit above the letter" of Islamic tradition (Binder, 1957: 387). More critically, the invisible but palpable presence in all of Ghamidi's writings is the Islamist Maududi, Ghamidi's one-time teacher and mentor. In many respects, Ghamidi's thought is a deep engagement with and criticism of Maududi's ideas. However, in inverting the balance towards method, privileging the text alone, he shifts the emphasis to a narrower conception of tradition in two important ways. Interesting and important sources of analysis such as the *fiqh* literature are left without a convincing role in the tradition. And second, the sensibility of accommodating ambiguities and difference that

he also acknowledges is an important aspect of the tradition loses its capacious contradictions through this dependence upon a very narrow range of sources.

Thus, Ghamidi's method eliminates the recognition of the significant debate and discussion that has existed in *fiqh* and related literature on the relationship between state and law (*sharia* vs. *qanun* debates). A defining aspect of *sharia* in all the years of Islamic history, and indeed its strength, has been in social self-enforcement rather than through the state (Hallaq, 2013; Agrama 2010; Gilmartin 1988; Khaduri 1984; Moumtaz n.d.;). Ghamidi undermines the state's right to enforce *sharia* without consultation and democratic checks, but as the discussion above shows he also paradoxically establishes the conceptual supremacy of the state to enforce *sharia* as law. Moreover, he shies away from a critical engagement with how precisely the state has transformed in the modern period. Instead he takes as given the liberal conception of a state that provides the locus of majoritarian aspirations and governance through laws. In accepting this conceptual supremacy of the state without really exploring the dynamics of its institutions, the mechanisms through which a consultation might actually be carried, the relationships of power that may inhere in the modern state, Ghamidi forecloses important avenues of debate and discussion. There is for instance, little leeway for alternative readings once the strict rules that Ghamidi lays down are followed (Amin, 2012: 179-182). The emphasis on method in this instance tends towards greater sterility and rigidity even if undertaken with the intention of innovation.

Conclusion

My interest here is not in critiquing Ghamidi's thought but to use the difficulty of categorizing his ideas within the dominant framework of traditionalists vs. modernists/reformists to show in more depth the problems with defining tradition on historicist bases. Building on the discussion of *taqlid* I have suggested an alternative

definition of tradition that would be helpful through a clearer demarcation of the constituent elements of tradition in political thought more generally. Moreover, I have argued that the vibrancy of a tradition is a calibration of both method and sensibility; neither can exist without the other although individual thinkers may emphasize one over the other. Within modern Islamic political thought the discussion about how to achieve the perfect balance between the two is the primary focus of long running and wide-ranging debates rather than accepting or rejecting modernity. The interest in pitting traditionalists against Islamists, or modernists against the militants, in the current context of the war on terror not only misses the axes along which these debates within the Islamic tradition are aligned, but ultimately represents certain colonial hubris in believing that they can be turned right around to conform to American interests in a tradition that has a diverse range of dedicated knowledge producers (*ulama*) and a wide variety of knowledge consumers. Placing Ghamidi's thought within the wider political context also highlights the changing political valence of tradition. Ultimately, new histories of political thought need to not only contend with new sources and resources, but more importantly, they need to redefine terms of use to engage meaningfully with a wider range of ideas.

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² It is important to recognise at this early stage that translating *sharia* as Islamic law is not entirely accurate since *sharia* does not comprise of specific laws but a set of moral and legal guidelines that can be adapted to particular situations.

³ Mufti, Shahan, The Fundamentalist Moderate, Boston Globe, 22 July 2007. http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/07/22/the_fundamentalist_moderate/?page=full (accessed 15.01. 2016)

⁴ Islamist thought, in particular, had been classified as a traditional reaction to modernity (Sivan, 1985; Tibi 1988, 1998; Ayubi, 1991), where tradition is defined primarily as that which is resistant to change. Those who sought to reform Islam were seen as modernists or at least as modern. One influential instance of this way of thinking is Fazlur Rahman (1982) the Pakistani scholar who taught for several decades at the University of Chicago after having served, during the 1960s, as the Chairman of the Council of Islamic

Ideology in Pakistan. He both popularized and exemplified the modernist Islamic thinker (Berry, 2006) arguing vociferously for *ijtihad* against *taqlid*.

⁵ I use the term philosophical school here rather than the more commonly used juridical school. The focus on the juridical aspect of these schools of thought has obscured the fact that these schools or *mazahib* are not merely founded on technical differences but on different philosophical approaches as well as for reasons of historical contingency (see Hallaq 2009; 2001; Rahman 1965).

⁶ They were both urban Muslims who sought a position for Muslims within the colonial administration but were, no doubt, also enthused by ideas that were new to them and came from their engagement with western educational institutions.

⁷ See in particular Euben's (1997) very helpful discussion of the Egyptian Islamist thinker Syed Qutb's engagement with modernity. Similarly, Iqtidar (2011) has argued that influential South Asian Islamist Abul Ala Maududi was an innovative modernist thinker who had engaged deeply with the idea of the modern state.

⁸ We see the problem with the binary of reform-as-modernity vs. tradition- as-lack- of-change that has been imposed on Islamic political thought as soon as we undertake a comparison in terms of a radical break with previously held ideas. Marshall Hodgson (1974), a historian of Islam, had observed at the end of his exploration of Islamic history that in terms of continued reliance on the same texts and ideas for several centuries, European thought is much more traditional. Islamic thought, and other non-western traditions have incorporated new conceptual frames and categories, unfamiliar institutional and ideational arrangements that were imposed during colonialism.

⁹ Interview Talal Asad by Saba Mahmood (1996) *Modern Power and the Reconfiguration of Religious Traditions* <https://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/asad.html>

¹⁰ While it useful to think through the precise religious lineage of some central liberal ideas as Asad does, it is important also to be wary of assuming that liberalism was generated entirely internally within Europe. Uday Mehta (1999) and Buck Morss (2009) among others have shown how integral experiences and ideas from American and Asian colonies were in formulating liberal ideas.

¹¹ In questioning the thought/practice dichotomy one of Asad's interests was in critiquing the textualization of Muslim social life but at the same time, this critique opens up, I believe, avenues for political theorists to grapple with resources beyond texts. In the case of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi his TV shows cannot be seen as providing the platform for readymade ideas but in fact, the mechanisms through which ideas are given shape, thought through and related to everyday life. New histories of political thought must contend with new sources and resources beyond texts.

¹² MacIntyre (2011:72) treats the theory of emotivism "not only as a philosophical analysis but also as a sociological hypothesis." He goes on to elaborate that he is unhappy about having to put the matter in this way because it remains unclear "how *any* adequate philosophical analysis in this area could escape being also a sociological hypothesis, and vice versa".

¹³ As Anjum (2007: 652) points out: " The consideration of the power of political, economic and social motivation, in Asad, is tempered with attention to the power of faith, conviction, nostalgia or superstition.....Such an attention makes possible the meeting of the discipline of Islamology and history on the one hand, and anthropology and political economy on the other."

¹⁴ Over the last two decades, Asad has painstakingly assembled the many pieces of these religious origins in the liberal traditions- from questions of pain, agency, memory, violence,

to the human and the secular. He has also detailed the ways in which they have been unhinged in contemporary liberal tradition.

¹⁵ Daniel Brown (1996:3) suggests a useful image to think about the relationship between tradition and modernity inverting the Enlightenment conception of tradition as darkness illuminated by modernity. Rather he suggests we should think about tradition as a beam of light and modernity as a prism through which tradition is refracted. “A tradition emerges from the prism of modernity as a multi-coloured spectrum of responses. Some responses will show the effects of modernity more dramatically than others, but none will be entirely untouched.”

¹⁶ Wahabism is the movement inspired by the 18th century Arabian reformer Moahmmed Ibn al Abdul Wahab who argued for an austere version of Islam.

¹⁷ Jalbani (1967) for an overview of Waliullah’s teachings

¹⁸ A school of thought that took strands from Wahabi reformism but tempered them with a continuous engagement with Sufism and a systematic approach to Islamic teaching.

¹⁹ Predominantly with non-Wahabi *ulama* who also support sufi practices

²⁰ Mass proselytizing and pietist group that is the largest grouping of Muslims today.

²¹ 18th Century madrassa bringing together Shia and Sunni scholarship.

²² For instance, despite Rahman’s criticism of the traditionalists he did not advocate an abandonment of the tradition. Moreover, he remained fascinated by and interested in resources for revival from pre-modern reform movements (Moosa (2000:10). As Leigh Jenco (n.d.) has suggested for late 19th and early 20th century Chinese reformers, for many of the Muslims modernists the contours of modernity were not sharply defined nor had they taken an inevitable shape beyond the tradition. They did not envision leaving the tradition behind when they incorporated specific ideas into their repertoires. On the contrary they saw their work as expanding the tradition.

²³ See for instance What is Liberal Islam? In Friday Times, a Pakistani newspaper:

(<http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta2/tft/blog.php?blogstory=4>) and ‘Islamic Scholar

Attacks Pakistan’s Blasphemy Laws’ in the UK based Guardian

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/20/islam-ghamidi-pakistan-blasphemy-laws> .

Ghamidi claims that he is “neither Islamist nor secular...” but “...a Muslim and a democrat”.

²⁴ The support for traditional Islam is wide-ranging including encouragement of Sufism, as a form of Islamic mysticism that represents a non-political interpretation of Islam. According to the NY Times, “[T]he United States, meanwhile, sees Sufi Islam as a counter force to terrorism, and has helped promote it by giving more than \$1.5 million since 2001 on the restoration and conservation of Sufi shrines in Pakistan.”(http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/06/the-islam-that-hard-liners-hate/?_r=0)

²⁵ Given the importance of international allies for legitimizing Musharaf’s regime his article launching ‘Enlightened Moderation’ was quite appropriately published in the Washington Post. Musharaf, Pervez, “A Plea for Enlightened Moderation” *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2004. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A5081-2004May31.html> (last accessed Oct 23, 2013)

²⁶ Council of Islamic Ideology is a constitutional body that is tasked with ensuring that all laws formulated by the Parliament are in accordance with Islam. Such a broad remit brings with it relatively little power towards enforcement.

²⁷ See Aziz (2011). However, Aziz has also argued convincingly that placing him merely as a puppet in Musharaf’s campaign does not recognize the limits placed by the demands of Ghamidi’s hermeneutic approach.

²⁸ Even while in exile, Ghamidi has returned to Pakistani television screens since 2014 with a program “*Ghamidi kay sath*” (With Ghamidi) recorded in Dubai with a live audience in Karachi asking questions through a video link. Finally, in addition to his international tours to

UK, USA and Australia (see his website <http://www.javedahmadghamidi.com/>) Javed Ghamidi sends out his thoughts to his international followers on twitter and through facebook.

²⁹ A Rand Corporation publication (Benard, 2004) lays out the following program for the support of traditionalists: “The West should support the traditionalists against the fundamentalists in these ways:

- Publicize traditionalist criticism of fundamentalist violence and extremism.
- Encourage disagreements between traditionalists and fundamentalists.
- Discourage alliances between traditionalists and fundamentalists.
- Encourage cooperation between modernists and reformist traditionalists.
- Where appropriate, educate the traditionalists to debate the fundamentalists. Fundamentalists are often rhetorically superior, while traditionalists practice a politically inarticulate "folk Islam." In places such as Central Asia, traditionalists may need to be trained in orthodox Islam to be able to stand their ground against fundamentalists.
- Increase the presence and profile of modernists in traditionalist institutions.”

³⁰One way in which this notion manifests itself is through call for a reformation in Islam. See Mehdi Hassan’s piece for an overview of some of these calls as well as his hard hitting response <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/17/islam-reformation-extremism-muslim-martin-luther-europe> (accessed July 23, 2016)

³¹ Ghamidi has a BA in English Literature from Lahore ‘s Government College and only started his apprenticeship with Maulana Islahi in his twenties after his initial introduction to the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami and its founder Maududi. Initially, Ghamidi had a close relationship with both Maududi and Islahi, but over time his pupilage with Islahi deepend and when Islahi left JI, Ghamidi followed suit soon after.

³²(Islahi n.d:10) Thomas Walker Arnold later became a Professor of Islamic Studies at SOAS from 1921-1930, and was one of the editors of the first edition of Brill's Encyclopaedia of Islam.

³³ (Islahi, n.d.: 11) is not sure about the dates. His estimate for the state visit with Lord Curzon is for 1900 but other records show that to have been 1903.

³⁴ At a period of great enthusiasm about the possibilities of print technology among Muslims of South Asia, Islahi's intellectual career follows a pattern common to many other prominent Muslim thinkers of the time. By late 19th century several key trends had to emergence of print as a very popular medium and to a boom in religious writings. By the 1870s editions of the *Quran* and other religious books were selling in tens of thousands in North India. In the same period, over seven hundred newspapers and magazines were launched in Urdu, the language associated primarily with Muslims of North India (Robinson, 1993: 67). Journalism became a career for many Islamic scholars, or *ulama*, the loosely organized and broadly meritocratic group of knowledge producers in the Islamic tradition who brought their historical and philosophical learning together with their skills in rhetoric and writing.

³⁵ During the 1965 presidential elections in Pakistan, Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami under Mawdudi supported Ms. Fatima Jinnah as a consensus candidate in its alliance with leftist groups against the then military dictator Gen. Ayub (1958-69). Islahi broke away from JI declaring that he could not participate in this opportunistic alliance that undermined JI's previous acceptance of sharia interpretations against a woman leader.

³⁶ Saleem Shahzad, a long time associate of Ghamidi's and translator of many of his works in English, points out in the Translator's note at the beginning of the English copy of *Mizan* that (p.12) "The *shariah* portion of this book has been entirely cleansed of *fiqh*. It is based purely on the author's understanding of divine law."

³⁷ <http://jang.com.pk/jang/jan2015-daily/22-01-2015/col10.htm> (last accessed 25 January 2016).

³⁸ However, if we move our analysis away from his texts, and to his television appearances Ghamidi engages with much more wide ranging sources bringing in many different kinds of thinkers and their arguments. In this short clip (<http://admin.samaa.tv/ghamidi-ke-saath/07-Feb-2015/ghamidi-ke-saath-07-feb-2015-samaa-tv>) for instance, he refers to Hegel and Marx to argue against political revolution while supporting at the same time an intellectual revolution (*fikri inquilab*).